THE FERN SOCIETY

OFVICTORIA

Inc.

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NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 13, Number 8, September 1991

FERN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA Inc.

POSTAL ADDRESS: P.O. Box 45, Heidelberg West, Victoria, 3081.

OFFICE BEARERS:

President: Barry White Phone 337 9793 Imm. Past President: Robert Lee 836 1528 Terry Turney Vice President: 571 8169 - 11 Secretary: Bernadette Thomson 399 1587 Treasurer: Marilyn Wood 434 3978 Membership Secretary: John Oliver Barry White John Oliver 879 1976 Spore Bank Manager: 337 9793 Editor: Robert Lee 836 1528 Book Sales: Derek Griffiths 336 3157 (8 Susan Court, East Keilor, Vic., 3033)

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Single - \$15.00 (Pensioner/Student - \$11.00)

Family - \$18.00 (Pensioners - \$13.00)

Overseas - A\$30.00 (by Airmail)

Subscriptions fall due on 1st July each year.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

I welcome this opportunity as the new President of the Fern Society to say 'Hello' to all members through this Newsletter. I look forward to working with you to help us all grow more and better ferns, and to learn a little more about ferns in the process.

My first pleasurable job is to thank Bob Lee for his sterling work as President over the past three years. He has set a standard which will be difficult to match. During his Presidency he has also continued his role as organiser of the Fern Show, and has recently undertaken the important role of Editor of the Newsletter. Thank you Bob.

I also wish to thank the outgoing members of the Committee and welcome the incoming ones, and look forward to many fruitful meetings. The Office Bearers of the new Committee are listed above; the new Committee Members are Don Fuller, Margaret Radley, George Start and Baxter Vertigan.

And a special word of thanks to those Members (listed in the President's Report later in this Newsletter) who have filled the many unelected positions which are vital to the efficient running of the Society.

Now for an appeal!

The prime purpose of the Society is to meet the interests and needs of the members. Members have a varying range of knowledge of ferns, and also a wide variety in their type of interest. The Committee endeavours to cater for the range of interests but in order to do this better it is necessary for Members to assist with comments, suggestions and constructive criticism. What topics are of interest to you for our monthly meetings? Suggestions for specific topics or for

(cont'd opposite)

NEXT MEETING

DATE: Thursday, 19th September, 1991.

TIME: Commencing at 7.30 p.m.

VENUE: The National Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens,

Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra. (Melway Directory Ref. 2L A1)

GUEST SPEAKER: Paul Barnett, Leader of the Otways Group of the

Society for Growing Australian Plants.

TOPIC: Ferns of the Otways.

MEETING TIMETABLE

7.30 p.m. Pre-Meeting Activities: - Sales of Ferns, Spore, Books

and Special Effort Tickets; Library Loans.

8.00 p.m. September General Meeting.

8.30 p.m. Guest Speaker.

9.30 p.m. Fern Identification and Pathology.

9.40 p.m. Special Effort Competition.

9.45 p.m. Supper.

10.00 p.m. Close.

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President's Message (cont'd):

general subject areas are welcome. How can the format of the meeting be improved? What areas can we visit on excursions? Could the excursions be organised in a different manner? How well do the Newsletter, Library, Book Sales and Spore Bank meet your needs? Are there any new initiatives which could be introduced? Let the Committee know your thoughts.

A Suggestion Box is now available at the monthly meetings. Please use this. And I address a special appeal to all those members who find difficulty in getting along to meetings. You are important members of the Society, the Committee needs to hear from you on how well we are meeting your needs. Please let us know, preferably by mail, what you would like to see the Society improve on or initiate.

The Committee will be considering next year's activities in the near future. Now is the best time for an input from members.

Regards, Barry White

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1990/1991.

(Presented at Annual General Meeting held 15th August, 1991.)

This report covers activities during the twelfth year in the life of the Fern Society of Victoria Inc.

Membership:

The year saw a decline in the Membership of the Society, which now stands at 280 individual Members. The fall resulted mainly from a very low number of new memberships; non-renewals were only marginally higher than in the previous period. Attention is being given to ways of increasing public awareness of the Society as a way of increasing member intake.

We were saddened by the sudden death in December of Albert Jenkins, a founding and Honorary Life Member of our Society. To mark the enormous contribution made by Albert to the progress of the Society, a treefern from his garden was purchased from his family and donated to the National Trust of Australia for planting in the fernery at "Rippon Lea" as a memorial.

Monthly Meetings:

Two visiting speakers and the talents of our own Members provided a suitable blend of educational, entertaining and practical topics but, unfortunately, our attempts to arrange for an Interstate Guest Speaker for the year did not bear fruit. Two audience discussion programmes on specific aspects of practical fern cultivation were well received and it is planned to make such evenings a regular part of our schedule. Our 1991/2 programme of meetings began well with a thoroughly researched and well-presented talk on the genus Dryopteris.

Excursions:

Three organised excursions were held during the year:

(1) A weekend trip by bus to the Marysville area.

(2) A day trip by private transport to the Mount Worth State Park in the Strzelecki Ranges near Warragul.

(3) An afternoon visit to Chris and Lorraine Goudey's nursery at Lara, which was organised to serve as our May General Meeting after our booking for the Herbarium hall was cancelled to allow the staging of a major exhibition there.

We also engaged in a form of a minor "excursion" when a number of Members spent a day at "Rippon Lea" on a working bee to assist with maintenance in the fernery.

Shows:

Our Annual Fern Show was held in April at the Nunawading Horticultural Centre in Forest Hill and the occasion was enjoyed by those Members taking part. Several new Members joined the Society. Unfortunately, however, the attendance by the public was much lower than in previous years and the financial return was correspondingly lower.

The members of the Show Committee for this year were Betty Allgood, Julian Basser, Ian Broughton, Derek Griffiths, John and Norma Hodges, Bob Lee, Barry and Gay Stagoll, Bill Taylor, Bernadette Thomson and Barry White.

In October, we participated again in the Stringybark Bush Festival, which was held at a new venue. Visitors to the Society stand were few and provided a disappointing return for the efforts of Bill Taylor and his small band of helpers.

Newsletter:

Our monthly Newsletter was initially edited by Doug Thomas, who also wrote the Speaker Reports from the monthly meetings, and typed by Joan Taylor. Doug resigned from the position of Editor in February and I have filled this role myself since then.

Folding and despatch of the Newsletter was again handled by our regular team of Kath Brown, Margaret Radley and Jean Trudgeon, who have handled this work efficiently for many years. John Oliver, our Membership Secretary, provided the necessary printed address labels.

Finance:

The Treasurer's Report has not been received from the Auditor in time for presentation at this Meeting. It will be presented at the September General Meeting and published in the October Newsletter.

The Society's finances are basically healthy with adequate reserves, but the Committee considered it prudent to increase Membership subscriptions slightly this year in the face of rising Newsletter costs and the large drop in revenue from the Annual Fern Show.

Extra expenditure has been committed for books to upgrade the Library but payment has not yet been made and hence will not show in the 1990/91 accounts. Similarly, we have offered to sponsor the cost of proper labelling of the plants in the fernery at "Rippon Lea" to a maximum of \$1,000, but this project has not yet proceeded to the stage where actual expenditure has been incurred.

Committee of Management:

The composition of the 1990/91 Committee of Management was as follows:

President: Robert Lee

Immediate Past President: Keith Hutchinson

Vice Presidents: Terry Turney

Barry White (from February)

Secretary: Bernadette Thomson

Treasurer: Marilyn Wood Committee Members: Don Fuller

John Hodges David Radford Margaret Radley George Start

While all members of the Committee served the Society well, special comments are appropriate in some cases:

Keith Hutchinson has been a tireless worker for the Society in the position above and in a continuous succession of earlier official positions, beginning as Editor in the first year of the Society's existence. Keith automatically retires from his present position with the expiry of my term as President. He does not wish to stand for election to the Committee again, but I am sure we will find him still working hard in other areas for the good of the Society and his fellow Members.

Margaret Radley has now completed her tenth year as a Committee Member - a very significant milestone which deserves special recognition. Margaret has indicated her willingness to continue Committee work.

Marilyn Wood volunteered for the position of Treasurer at the last Annual General Meeting - a laudable example of enthusiasm, as Marilyn was then a new Member attending her first Meeting of the Society.

John Hodges and David Radford have both made valuable contributions to the activities of the Committee in their respective five and six years of service. They now wish to retire to allow more time for other activities.

Margaret and Keith are not present tonight, but I am sure you would all wish to join me in expressing thanks in the traditional manner to them and the others mentioned .

Non-Elected Positions:

Many positions other than those on the formal elected Committee have to be filled to keep our Society operating. Some of these and their occupants have already been mentioned in this report; the others are listed below:

Public Officer -Minute Secretary -Membership Secretary -Publicity Officer -Spore Bank Manager -

Fern Identification & Pathology - Chris Goudey Librarian -Book Sales -Property Officer -Special Effort Organisers -Supper Hostesses -

Keith Stubbs David Radford John Oliver Derek Griffiths Barry White - assisted since June by

John Hooper David Radford Derek Griffiths John Oliver

Margaret Radley and Joy Horman Jean Boucher and Norma Hodges

I sincerely thank all the Members mentioned specifically in this report and the many who have assisted in various other ways throughout the year for their contributions to the functioning of the Society.

In conclusion, I should like to wish the incoming President and Committee a successful and rewarding year in office.

Robert Lee President

DAY TRIP TO HEALESVILLE AREA

As previously advised this trip will be on Sunday, 29th September and private transport will be used.

Those taking part in the excursion should assemble at 10.00 a.m. at the Fernshaw Reserve on the Maroondah Highway - where the Highway crosses the Watts River about 11 kilometres past Healesville. Fernshaw is clearly marked at grid reference S1 on the second of the double-spread maps titled "Melbourne Day Tours" at the end of the Melway Street Directory (Map 284 in recent editions).

We will have morning tea before moving off on the tour of the fern areas at 10.30 a.m. Road surfaces on the route are either sealed or good gravel.

Everyone is asked to bring all their own requirements for a picnic lunch and morning and afternoon teas. It will not be possible for the Society to provide tea and coffee this time, as we will not be stopping long enough in the one area to boil water.

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SPEAKER REPORT - AUGUST GENERAL MEETING

"Ferns of Zimbabwe" by Chris Goudey

A report on the presentation made at the August General Meeting will appear in the October edition of the Newsletter.

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VALE

We are saddened to report the death of June Kennedy who was a Member of our Society from its early years. June was the sister of Kath Browm to whom we extend our deepest sympathy.

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Spore Request:

An avid fern grower from San Francisco, Iris Gaddis, has written requesting Australian fern spore. She is particularly after any Australian or N.Z. Asplenium or Lindsaea (i.e., "wedge-" or "screw-fern") species, as well as Pleurosorus rutifolius and Platyzoma microphyllum. (If anyone has successfully raised the last species from spore, or even obtained prothallia, the F.S.V. would also be most interested to hear about it). If you can help, please contact me at a Society meeting or on (03) 571 8169. Iris has also informed us that the San Francisco Fern Society has recently been inaugurated; they meet monthly at the Univ. of Calif., Berkeley, Botanic Garden or at members homes. We extend to them our best wishes for a successful Society.

Terry Turney

THE RARE AND THREATENED FERNS AND FERN ALLIES OF VICTORIA

by Dr Tim Entwisle

(Continuation of Speaker Report from June General Meeting)

EASTERN MOUNTAINS (cont'd)

Asplenium hookerianum (Small Spleenwort) - "endangered": This Bryces Gorge species is found also near Caledonia River on the other side of the Snowy Range. It was first found in Victoria in 1971 and even more recently in Tasmania. It is rare in N.S.W. (on Southern Tablelands) and classed as vulnerable Australia-wide, but is relatively common in New Zealand.

GIPPSLAND

Seven species have been mentioned earlier as extending across into Gippsland (Cyathea cunninghamii, C. X marcescens, Lastreopsis hispida, Lindsaea microphylla, Tmesipteris elongata and T. ovata). Two species have their sole Victorian occurrences in the central or southern Gippsland areas. One is restricted in distribution, while the other may in fact be a weed species in Victoria.

Adiantum diaphanum (Filmy Maidenhair) - "endangered": Occurs in the Strzelecki Ranges, where it was first recorded in 1880 but then not until 1972. It has been found in two new locations in the last three years, but all in the same area. It occurs also in N.S.W. and Queensland.

Marsilea mutica (Smooth Nardoo) - "rare": This aquatic fern is found in one locality in Gippsland and is also known from Warragul and Lilydale, though these latter populations are presumed to be plantings. Even the Gippsland one may be a cultivation escape. If this is true, M. mutica could be a weed species in Victoria rather than a rare native species. This would make it one of the State's only two or three fern or fern-ally weeds, the others being Selaginella kraussiana and perhaps Adiantum capillus-veneris. It will probably be impossible to confirm whether M. mutica is introduced or native in Victoria. It is found in most Australian states.

WILSONS PROMONTORY

Two species are restricted to the "Prom" and are rare even there:

Lindsaea trichomanoides (Oval Wedge-fern) - "endangered": This has been reported from only a couple of localities on the Prom and only one of these has been confirmed recently. The fern also occurs in N.S.W. and Tasmania (as well as New Zealand and Fiji) and its isolated occurrence on the Prom is hard to explain.

Hypolepis elegans (no common name) - "vulnerable": This is the only Hypolepis species with a membranous flap covering the sori. It is known only from three incredibly separated mainland locations in Australia - the Atherton Tableland, Richmond River (N.S.W.) and Wilsons Promontory - and is also found in some south-west Pacific islands. This distribution provides some evidence for widespread spore distribution by wind (it is considered not to be some Ice-Age relict).

The fern is truly rare in Australia and vulnerable at least in Wilsons Promontory.

EAST GIPPSLAND

Eleven of the species already discussed occur in East Gippsland and another eleven make their only Victorian appearance in this region.

Christella dentata (Binung or Soft Fern) - "endangered": Grows below an outflow of calcium-rich water near Buchan. There is a record from Curdies River near Port Campbell made in 1883, but this has not been seen since and was possibly a misidentified Pneumatopteris.

Adiantum formosum (Giant Maidenhair or Blackstem Maidenhair) -"rare": Like a number of the ferns below (and other plant species) this is only classed as rare in Victoria because of the arbitrary State boundary. It occurs also in N.S.W., Queensland and New Zealand. In East Gippsland it occurs on river flats and moist rainforest slopes, mainly around the Snowy River like a number of other rare plant species (e.g. Cabbage Palm and Eucalyptus maculata). Presumably, some unique climatic conditions associated with the Snowy River, which is Victoria's warmest river, make this little pocket of Victoria more like further north.

Adiantum hispidulum (Rough Maidenhair) - "rare": This is locally common in East Gippsland along cliffs and overhangs, particularly near the Genoa River (very near the border). It also occurs up the east coast through N.S.W. and Queensland, as well as in N.T. and W.A. and many other countries.

<u>Deparia petersenii</u> (Japenese Lady-fern) - "rare": Previously known as <u>Athyrium japonicum</u> or <u>Lunathyrium japonicum</u>. Although rare in Victoria (only East Gippsland), it has a wide distribution around the World and again is found right up the east coast of Australia.

<u>Polystichum formosum</u> (Broad Shield-fern) - "rare": Occurs at only a few sites in East Gippsland but then goes on up the coast. It seems to hybridise with the common <u>P. proliferum</u> (Mother Shield-fern), which should complicate conservation efforts.

Sticherus flabellatus (Shiny Fan-fern) - "rare": Is distinguished by serrated pinnae at an angle of about 45 degrees. It is found in Victoria from Mallacoota to Errinundra, and then extends on up the coast through N.S.W. to Queensland.

<u>Lastreopsis decomposita</u> (Trim Shield-fern) - "vulnerable": Is known in Victoria only from east of Mallacoota Inlet, but it extends up the east coast from there and so is only vulnerable in Victoria because the State border cuts off a tiny portion of its range.

Pteris vittata (Chinese Brake) - "vulnerable": This also occurs up the east coast as well as in W.A. and right around the World, so it is only vulnerable in Victoria where it is found in a strange outlying area near Buchan on rocks and stony hillsides (limestone and possibly granite).

Cyathea leichardtiana (Prickly Tree-fern) - "vulnerable": The common name comes from the sharp spines at the base of the fronds. While this fern is abundant at the sites where it occurs in the far east and in

the Fairy Dell near Bruthen, it is very localised and hence vulnerable. The Victorian localities again represent the southern limit of a range which extends into N.S.W. and Queensland.

Gleichenia rupestris (a Coral-fern) - "vulnerable": This was only discovered last year at Rame Head and does not yet have an official status as vulnerable, but with only one locality in this State it clearly has this rating. It occurs also along the east coast in very specialised habitats - oozy seepage areas beside the ocean. In appearance it is like G. microphylla but is glaucous beneath.

Asplenium polyodon (Sickle Spleenwort) - "extinct": The list ends with our one definite extinction (for Victoria, remembering that we have no fern taxa restricted to this State). Only one plant of A. polyodon has ever been reported in Victoria, growing on the wall of a huge rock crevice three kilometres south-east of Genoa. A single frond was collected for the Herbarium in 1940. The plant died soon afterwards and the species is now thought to be extinct in Victoria. It does grow up the east coast and in New Zealand, Asia and the Pacific. The name A. polyodon has been misused by some authors and records of this species from locations such as the Grampians refer to A. aethiopicum.

In concluding, Dr Entwisle remarked that whatever the reason for rareness, which is always relative and attributable to a range of causes, we have to place priorities on what we feel are important parts of the flora. For us living in Victoria it is important that we retain those species that grow within our borders (no matter how arbitrary those borders might be) and, irrespective of borders, it would be sad to have to record that the southernmost limit of a fern had moved a few hundred kilometres northward.

With the possible advent of global warming, the northern limits of some warm-temperate species may move south and the species then become extinct if the present southern habitats and populations are not preserved. On the other hand, alpine species may disappear completely (there is not much snow area as it is) and there is probably nothing much that we can do to preserve these except for "captive breeding".

We also need to look beyond "rare species" and aim to preserve as much morphological and geographical variation within species as possible. This includes local variants or interesting geographical records. The listing of rare or threatened ferns is a highly academic and sterile procedure but, sadly, it is the only way to summarise those parts of the Victorian fern and fern ally flora that we perceive as most pvulnerable. As fern enthusiasts we should look beyond such lists and take the view that any isolated occurrence of any fern is a rare plant and worth preserving.

The President thanked Dr Entwisle for his extremely interesting and informative talk and presented him with a set of Society glasses. Members present endorsed the vote of thanks with acclamation.

During the discussion period after the talk, Dr Entwisle was asked to comment on a plant of an unusual Adiantum propagated from a discovery made by Mary Frost, one of our Members, near an old gold mine in the

Beechworth area, where it was growing amongst Adiantum aethiopicum. He took a sample for further investigation and later reported, after discussion with Mary and various botanist colleagues, that the fern was considered at this stage to be a different growth form or natural "sport" of normal A. aethiopicum. It will be mentioned as such in "Flora of Victoria". There is not yet sufficient evidence to show that it is a sub-species or variety. The fern is being marketed by a Queensland nursery under the trade name "Mrs Frost". Congratulations, Mary!

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FORTHCOMING GENERAL MEETINGS

OCTOBER MEETING

Date: Thursday, 17th October.

Time: Commencing at 7.30 p.m.

Venue: The National Herbarium, South Yarra.

Guest Speaker: Mr Steven Stewart of Gale Australia Pty Ltd.

Topic: Shade Cloth and its Application.

NOVEMBER MEETING:

Date: Thursday, 21st November.

Time & Venue: As For October.

Topic: Group Discussion on "Problem Ferns".

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SPECIAL EFFORT WINNERS

August General Meeting

Joan Taylor

Joy Horman

Don Fuller (2)

John Hooper

Norma Hodges



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BUYERS' GUIDE TO NURSERIES

VICTORIA:

Allans Flat Plant Farm - Retail.

Tomkins Lane, Allans Flat, 3691. Ph: (060) 27 1375.

(25 km south of Wodonga on the Yackandandah Road).

Specialising in ferns and indoor plants. Open daily (except Wednesdays) and all public holidays.

Andrew's Fern Nursery - Retail.

Cosgrove Road, Invergordon, 3636. Ph: (058) 65 5369.

Large range of ferns for beginners and collectors.

Open Sundays only; other days by appointment.

<u>Austral Ferns</u> - Wholesale Propagators. Ph: (052) 82 3084. Specialising in supplying retail nurseries with a wide range of hardy ferns; no tubes.

Dingley Fern Market - Wholesale and Retail. Ph: (03) 551 1868.

233 Centre Dandenong Road, Dingley, 3172.

Specialising in Ferns, Palms, Indoor Plants, Orchids and Carnivorous Plants. Open daily except Christmas Day.

Fern Acres Nursery - Retail.

Kinglake West, 3757. Ph: (057) 86 5481.

(On main road, opposite Kinglake West Primary School).

Specialising in Stags, Elks and Bird's-nest Ferns.

Fern Glen - Wholesale and Retail. Visitors welcome. D. & I. Forte, Garfield North, 3814. Ph: (056) 29 2375.

R. & M. Fletcher's Fern Nursery - Retail.

62 Walker Road, Seville, 3139. Ph: (059) 64 4680.

(Look for sign on Warburton Highway, 300m east of Seville shopping centre). Closed Tuesday, except on public holidays.

Mt. Evelyn Fern Centre - Retail. Mail Orders welcome. 63 York Road, Mt. Evelyn, 3796. Ph: (03) 736 1729.

Ridge Road Fernery - Wholesale and Retail. Weeaproinah, 3237. Ph: (052) 35 9383. Specialising in Otway native ferns.

Viewhaven Nursery - Wholesale and Retail.

Avon Road, Avonsleigh (near Emerald). Ph: (059) 68 4282

Specialists in Stags, Elks, Bird's-nests and Native Orchids.

NEW SOUTH WALES:

Jim & Beryl Geekie Fern Nursery - Retail. By appointment. 6 Nelson Street, Thornleigh, 2120. Ph: (02) 484 2684.

Marley's Ferns - Retail.
5 Seaview Street, Mt. Kuring-gai, 2080. Ph: (02) 457 9168.

QUEENSLAND:

Moran's Highway Nursery - Wholesale and Retail. P.O. Box 467, Woombye, 4559. Ph: (071) 42 1613. (1 km north of Big Pineapple; turn right into Kell Road).